

THE BEACON

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

VOL. XIX. No. 34

THE BEACON PRESS, INC., BOSTON, MASS.

MAY 26, 1929

IT was on a rainy Friday afternoon that the old man first came to the children's room at the Longfield Public Library. Because it rained, books to read at home that evening were important, and the room was crowded with boys and girls.

The old man looked around with a timid smile, but nobody seemed to notice him. Miss Burt and Miss Canfield were both busy at the desk, and the children were choosing stories. For some time he looked along the shelves and then took a volume and sat down at the table with the littlest children. It was the table that held the picture-books.

Later in the afternoon, Miss Burt noticed him, absorbed in his book. He was perfectly quiet, only, as he read, he pronounced each word with his lips, without making any sound. When the whistles blew at six o'clock, the old man rose and put his book back in the place it belonged. He looked across the room at Miss Burt, made her a funny little bow, and went away.

The next afternoon he came again and sat at the same table with the same book. This time the children noticed him.

"This is our room," said Morris Troubetsky to Miss Burt. "The big people have their own place. He ought to go there and read."

"Probably he won't come again," said Miss Burt. "If he is a stranger in town, maybe he doesn't know that there is another part to the building."

"I could tell him," said Tanis. "I could show him the other door to the big library."

"There is room for him here," said Miss Burt. "He is not doing anybody any harm, is he?"

"No-o," said Morris doubtfully, "only it is our room and he doesn't belong here."

"I think we had better let him stay," said Tanis. "Perhaps he is somebody's grandpa, and that is a book he read when he was a little boy."

The Old Grandpa

By Edna A. Brown

"I feel sure he is somebody's grandpa," agreed Miss Burt. "Let's treat him the way we would want our own grandpas to be treated."

"That would be politely," admitted Morris, and the other children around Miss Burt's desk agreed that the old grandpa should not be told that he was not expected to sit in the children's room.

"Would it be impolite to look at the book he is reading?" asked Tanis.

"Not if you do it carefully," said Miss Burt after a minute. "I should like to know myself."

"I will be careful," said Tanis, and she went to the table where the old grandpa sat.

The children and Miss Burt all watched. Tanis passed behind the old grandpa and looked over his shoulder. Then she leaned across the table and took a picture-book. She looked at it for sev-

eral minutes. She came back to the desk.

"He is reading the life of Abraham Lincoln," she whispered to Miss Burt.

"He is at the top of page 8."

"There are plenty of lives of Lincoln," said Morris. "That is all right then. He can come and read it if he wants to."

Morris went away from the desk, and the other children scattered to select their own books. The old grandpa sat on, turning a page at long intervals.

At six, he made Miss Burt his little bow, and went away. On Monday afternoon he came again, took his book and sat down at the table, and the next day and the next.

The children accepted him without further comment. They even found him useful. He helped Mary Shameklis pull on her too-small overshoes. He was quite willing to "mind" a loaf of bread for Nellie Skeas, and he could be trusted as a parking-place for valuable toy automobiles. And Henry of Navarre, the library cat, liked the old grandpa. He jumped on his knee the third time he came.

When Henry did this, the old grandpa looked startled, but then he smiled, and stroked Henry's head. Henry began to purr, and turned round and round, and settled down for a nap. The children and Miss Burt smiled. Henry did not often choose to get into anybody's lap. Perhaps he knew that the old grandpa was much more likely to sit still than were the restless children.

Very slowly the old grandpa progressed from page 8 to page 45. And then, one day after he had gone, a shocking thing happened.

Miss Burt saw the group of boys arguing by the door. Harry was its center, and he looked red and angry. Morris was blocking the way out, and Tom and Isidor and Rene were trying to get hold of something which Harry held behind him.

Miss Burt left her desk.



"Tanis passed behind the old grandpa and looked over his shoulder."

"What is the trouble?" she asked. "What is the matter with Harry?"

"He has taken the old grandpa's book," said Morris and Tom together. "Miss Canfield stamped it for him. She didn't know it was that book. Harry is a pig to take it away."

Miss Burt looked at Harry. "You didn't know it was his book, did you?" she asked.

"Yes, I did," said Harry crossly. "I don't see why I can't take it. He is gone and the book was back on the shelf for anybody to take."

"The old grandpa isn't through with it," burst out Morris. "There is his book-mark at page 78. He will come back tomorrow and the book won't be here for him."

"He can read another," said Harry, still holding behind him the *Life of Lincoln*.

"So can you," said Tom.

"I have a right to take it," said Harry. "Haven't I, Miss Burt?"

Everybody within hearing had stopped reading to look at Miss Burt and the group of angry boys.

"You have the right," said Miss Burt slowly, "but I don't believe, Harry, you really want to use that right, do you?"

Harry looked crosser than ever, but he also grew a little redder.

"Some other life of Lincoln would do just as well for you, wouldn't it?" asked Miss Burt. "I have a very interesting new one with pictures, on the shelf of clean books. You are always careful, Harry, about having your hands clean. How about taking that new one and leaving this for the old grandpa to finish?"

"All right," said Harry gruffly.

Miss Burt took the new life of Lincoln from the special shelf, and changed it for the one Harry held. The boys all went away except Morris. He asked Miss Burt for a pencil and a piece of paper. Miss Burt put the book back on the shelf just where the old grandpa was accustomed to find it.

Morris wrote on his paper. He put it in the book-pocket of the *Life of Lincoln*. Then he went home.

Tanis had been reading at a table. After Morris went away, she got up and looked at the book. She brought it to the desk to show Miss Burt.

Upon the paper in the pocket, Morris had written: NOBODY IS TO SNITCH THIS BOOK HOME TILL THE OLD GRANDPA GETS THROUGH.

"Shall I leave it?" asked Tanis.

Miss Burt looked at the paper for quite a long time without answering.

"Snitch' is not polite," said Tanis, "and 'nobody' has only one d. Shall I change it?"

"No," said Miss Burt. "We will leave it in the book and just as Morris wrote it."

So the next afternoon when the old

grandpa came, his book was on the shelf and Henry was waiting to get into his lap.

There were 194 pages in the *Life of Lincoln* and it took the old grandpa almost a month to a day to read it. By that time, the children would have missed him had he not come. The chair he liked best was always left for him, for nobody thought of taking it any more than his book.

He finished the *Life of Lincoln* at twenty minutes past four on the day before Memorial Day. He laid it down on the table before him and took off his spectacles with their rusty steel bows. He looked around at the children and smiled at those nearest. After a little, he put Henry gently on one of the window-seats. He took the book and went up to the library desk.

"I am very much obliged to you, ma'am," he said to Miss Burt, with his stiff little bow. "It has meant a lot to me to read that book. And I like your cat and your children."

"Won't you find another book to read?" asked Miss Burt. "Henry and the children like to have you come."

"I am going away," said the old grandpa. "I was only visitin' my son here in Longfield. It was just that book I wanted to read. You see I once met Lincoln."

Quite a number of children were standing near the desk. Such a silence as fell upon them! Even Miss Burt gave a little gasp.

"You knew Lincoln?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, ma'am," said the old grandpa. "He once shook my hand."

As he spoke, the old grandpa looked at the knotted, worn fingers of his right hand. He did not seem to notice the awed stillness of the room.

Miss Burt rose. "Children!" she said. "This gentleman, who has been our guest, knew President Lincoln!" Then she turned to the old grandpa. "Won't you tell us about it?" she asked.

"Why, yes, ma'am," said the old grandpa, straightening his shoulders, "though there isn't much to tell. It was over sixty years ago. I was a boy of sixteen when I ran away and enlisted. I'm eighty now, ma'am. It was the worst year of the war, just after Gettysburg."

He stopped to look around the room. The children, sitting at the tables, or leaning against the shelves, were all looking at him and all were breathlessly still. Harry and Morris had crept to the door to see that no newcomer interrupted the story.

"President Lincoln came to camp to talk things over with the commandin' generals. Headquarters was in an old farmhouse and I was told off with the guard. 'Twas a cold night and the adjutant sent out for more wood. I took it in, and glad I was of the chance. The President was sittin' in an ordinary camp chair, big and sort of sprawlin', for he

was a loose-constructed sort of man. I was so scart by the idee of seein' him that I dropped some of the wood. He looked at me then and sort of smiled.

"And where do you come from, boy?" he asked.

"Illinois, Mr. President," says I.

"So do I," says he, and then he holds out his hand. 'Shake, Neighbor,' says President Lincoln.

"And that's how I came to shake hands with Lincoln," ended the old grandpa.

"It is a wonderful thing to remember," said Miss Burt softly.

"Yes, ma'am, so it is," agreed the old grandpa. "And it was a fine thing to happen to a boy. Boys are harum-searum animals, always into mischief and up to all sorts of unmannerly behavior. It made me stop and think, you know, — that I must keep my hand from bad deeds, because it once held Lincoln's hand."

He stopped again to look thoughtfully at his gnarled fingers. "I've worked hard all my years and never seemed to get much ahead, ma'am, but I've so lived that I wouldn't be ashamed to give my hand again to Lincoln."

Miss Burt's eyes looked a little misty. She glanced quickly at the children, quiet as mice, gazing with absorbed interest at the old grandpa who had known Lincoln.

"Would you do something for us that we shall consider a great honor?" she asked. "Would you be willing to shake hands with us all? I know it is a good deal to ask, but you see President Lincoln died before any of us were born. We never before met anyone who saw him alive. And tomorrow is Memorial Day."

"Indeed, ma'am, I'll be pleased and proud to do so," said the old grandpa earnestly, and he threw his head back and straightened his shoulders as a good soldier should.

Miss Burt took his hand first, and then he stood by the desk and shook hands with all the children, as, one by one, they filed gravely past. Miss Burt stood watching them: among them, Morris, from Russia; Tanis from Greece; Rene from France; Katie from Ireland; Jessie from Scotland, together with Polly Winsor and Carola Thorne, whose very-great grandfathers helped settle New England in the days of the Pilgrims and Puritans.

Yet they were all loyal Americans and all were equally thrilled by the honor of touching the hand of the old grandpa who had once held the hand of President Lincoln.

Midsummer Joys

Heigh-o! The growing things!
Heigh-o! The blossomings!
The trees in mass of green!
I'm glad for all midsummer joys, —
Mine are these things I've seen!

—Marlive Stetson.

Mr. and Mrs. Wren at Home

By Betsey Scoville Provost

THEODORE was lying in the grass under the wren house watching the wrens as they coaxed and wheedled their young ones to come out and try their wings. At least that was what he thought they were doing, for there was much cheeping and twittering on their part and many soft little answering tweet-tweets from inside the house.

"I wish I could see what is in there," thought Theodore. He and brother Jack had made the bird house themselves, using a flower-pot upside-down on its saucer. The house had a cone-shaped roof of building paper and a small round doorway, which they had carefully chipped out with a nail.

To their delight, the wrens had moved in as soon as they had hung it in the pear tree, carrying in quantities of sticks and grasses, Mr. Wren pausing every so often to sing lustily. He was so happy.

But just now he was not singing. He was uttering queer little coaxing chirps, putting his head in at the door and then hopping from branch to branch as if he would say, "See, this is the way to do it."

"I wish he would *do* something," Theodore said. "He has been chattering that way so long it makes me sleepy. 'I'd help him if I could.'"

"Well, sir, you can," a tiny voice said. Theodore did not know he had spoken aloud. He looked up in surprise. That is, he looked surprised; he was already looking up. There perched Mr. Wren on a low branch with his tail standing up, like a little brown club, straight in the air.

If you had put a porch on our house when you made it, your present tenants would not be having so much trouble," he went on severely, as he hopped to another branch and then flew to the grass beside Theodore. "I really do not like to complain, especially as we are getting it for a song, for the place is fairly comfortable since we furnished it ourselves. But I do think you might have thought of a porch when you were building for a family where there are growing children."

"Why we didn't know about — I never thought — I —" stammered Theodore.

"Then, now you *do* know, perhaps you will not criticize me when I am trying to train my children under such adverse conditions. Come on up and look us over and see for yourself just how things are."

"But," Theodore started to say, "how can I?" when he found himself standing up among blades of grass that did look like so many green blades — sword blades, growing in the ground, way up as high as his shoulder. The trunk of the pear tree looked enormous, and there

were wide, deep crevices in the bark. All up one side were tiny notches, making a queer ladder. He waded through the tall, green swords and obeyed Mr. Wren when he told him to climb. He was only a sixteenth of an inch taller than his brown friend now and quite as small around. It took no time at all to reach the branch nearest the Wrens' door, but Mr. Wren was there waiting, cheeping impatiently.

"Can you hop it?" he asked.

"I am afraid I can't," Theodore said.

"Well, then, you see!" Mr. Wren was still very cross. "You see. What can you expect of my poor children with their untried wings?"

Just then Mrs. Wren poked out her head.

"Johnnie," she cheeped softly, "I have got the children to sleep at last. They were so tired after the way you worried them about learning to fly. Please be quiet! What in the tree-top is *that*?" She forgot to be quiet herself as she looked at Theodore in surprise.

"*That*, Jennie," answered her husband, "is our landlord. He has come up to see about putting on a porch for us. But I think we shall have to build him a bridge first. He is afraid to hop."

"No, I am not," cried Theodore, and made a flying leap from the branch right to the door of the house. Mrs. Jennie Wren had just time to dodge as he scrambled through the round hole he remembered making very small to keep out the big birds and the squirrels.

He seemed, at first, to be in a sort of brush pile, but after he got used to the darkness, he saw, over on one side at the top, a hollow place nicely lined with soft grass. In it were six little balls of downy, tan feathers. The baby wrens fast asleep! He tried to speak quietly but his voice sounded very loud and harsh in that small space.

"I am afraid I have disturbed you, Madam. I am very sorry."

"No, it is all right," said Mr. Wren, looking in from the doorway. "Now that you are here please take a look at that place in the roof. It leaked badly in the last rain and we had to move everything over to the corner — I mean the side — of the house. Another season I trust it can be fixed. The house is really larger than we need anyway. It was something of a task to furnish it. My wife and I worked very hard, didn't we, Jennie?"

"Yes, very hard," said Miss Jennie. "You sang while I —"

"Yes, yes, my dear, of course," he interrupted. "I want to see what can be done about the porch. If we could find just the right-sized twig —"

"Twig?" questioned Theodore, "I thought you said porch. A twig is not enough to build a porch."

"He did say porch," Mrs. Wren said. "My husband has a peculiar pronunciation, having spent so much time in the South and West. He means *perch*. You see I have traveled a great deal myself — my accent —"

"Oh, *perch*!" Theodore rudely exclaimed. "That's easy." And in the flash of a wing, as Mrs. Wren said, he had wedged a piece of forked stick, which he pulled from the pile on which they stood, into the door of the Wren's house, "There!"

"Nothing can dislodge it, can there?" Mrs. Wren asked anxiously, and Mr. Wren flew out to try it.

"No, no, Jennie, that is fine," he said. "I knew we could fix it some way. We men are so very resourceful, my dear."

"Huh, you, I did it!" Theodore shouted so loudly, the baby wrens drew their little heads from under their tiny wings and began to cheep plaintively with wide-open beaks.

"There, now see what you have done," scolded Mrs. Wren. "If you are going to thunder like that, please go outside. My babies have had excitement enough for one day." And she rushed at Theodore and fairly brushed him through the door with her out-spread wings. He felt himself floating out lightly like a feather, down, down, down, bump!

Suddenly he opened his eyes. He was in the grass under the pear tree. Overhead, Mr. Wren was yet coaxing and Mrs. Wren was wheedling. Theodore stared. There was the twig wedged in the round hole in the flower-pot, and on it a baby wren was stretching his wings. While Theodore watched he half flew, half hopped, over to a tree branch. Then another little one appeared on the twig, coaxed by the father and brushed along by the outstretched wings of the mother. And then another and another.

"That's four," whispered Theodore to himself, "I wonder where the other two are. I wonder how that stick — porch I mean — got there. I do believe — I wonder if he did it, or I."

But Mr. and Mrs. John Wren were too busy with their children to answer him, so he will always wonder.

Memorial Day

By RUTH MELICK GRIFFITH

Our flag hung out on its staff today
And swayed in the gentle breeze,
And everyone's heart who saw it there
Was filled with memories.

Some were of war, and some were of
peace,

And some we shall grieve about;
For the day was filled with memories,
And all of the flags were out.

THE BEACON CLUB

The Editor's Post Box

Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

Puzzlers

Beheadings

1. I am a decoration of nature; behead me and I am farther from the highest.
2. I am a seed of a much-prized tree; behead me and I am a grain.
3. I am a knavish fellow; behead me and I am a collection of tents.
4. I am a fireplace; behead me and I am a planet.
5. I am a stranger; behead me and I am a claim.
6. I am a musical sound; behead me and I am a cozy nook.
7. I am a person of dignity; behead me and I am a quantity.

E. F. B.

Acrostic and Anagram

When you have guessed the words indicated by the following definitions, place them in a column:

1. Quick blow.
2. Eggs — Latin.
3. Enclosed place, used to hold something.
4. Possessive pronoun.
5. No.

The initials will give you the name of a bird; the finals, a flower. The remaining letters will make words to fill the following blanks:

We will go ** once *** New York.

—Firelight.

Answers to Puzzles in No. 32

Mr. Colonel. — Corn.

Printer's Pi. — The bees are drowsy about the hive, Earth is so warm and gay; And it's joy enough to be alive In the heavenly month of May.

"Ten Words." — 1. Threaten. 2. Sweeten. 3. Often. 4. Lighten. 5. Heighten. 6. Brighten. 7. Hearten. 8. Dishearten. 9. Marten. 10. Hasten. 11. Fasten. 12. Chasten.



1407 LIBERTY ST.,
ALTON, ILL.

Dear Editor: I am sending you a picture of the Unitarian Sunday School at Alton, Illinois. It was taken on Easter Sunday. Our superintendent and leader is a Meadville student, Mr. Harvey Swanson, and he comes two hundred and sixty-five miles from Chicago every week-end to direct the affairs of our school. He also preaches in our church once a month. We have no resident minister just now.

My teacher's name is Miss Sadie Meriwether. I am in the sixth grade.

Very truly,

—PHEBE MCADAMS.

(Thank you, Phebe, for your interesting letter and for the fine photograph. We hope all these happy-looking boys and girls are on hand every Sunday to greet your superintendent after his long ride.—Ed.)

37 GARFIELD ST.,
WATERTOWN, MASS.

Dear Editor: It has been some time since anyone in our Sunday school has written to you, so I thought I would. I go to the Sunday school of the First Church in Watertown. It was founded in 1630. My teacher's name is Miss Campbell. The Superintendents are Rev. Mr. Meredith and Mr. Harry Gould. I would like to join the Beacon Club and wear a pin. I like *The Beacon*. I am nine years old.

With love,

LOUISE NORTH.

626 MARNE RD.,
ERIE, PA.

Dear Beacon Club Editor: I would like to become a member of your club and wear its pin.

I go to the Unitarian Church and Sunday School. Our minister's name is Charles J. Dutton. I am nine years old and am in the fourth grade at school. I have a little sister that would like to

join the Club, too. She is four years old.

I read *The Beacon* every Sunday. I like to read the letters of the new members. I would like to do something for *The Beacon*, so I will send you some puzzles.

Yours truly,

ALMA JONES.

(Thank you for the puzzles, Alma. We shall all enjoy them.—Ed.)

116 BELLEPLAINE,
PARK RIDGE, ILL.

Dear Editor: I joined the Beacon Club last year but I have lost my pin and would appreciate it very much if you would send me another. Our pastor's name is Dr. Bradley and the Sunday-school superintendent is Mr. Denicke. My teacher is Miss Stauch. I would like to correspond with girls of my age; I am thirteen years old.

Yours sincerely,

IRENE EDDY.

THE BEACON is published weekly from the first Sunday of October to the first Sunday of June, by THE BEACON PRESS, INC., 25 Beacon St., Boston, Mass. Distributed also at 285 Madison Ave., New York City; 105 S. Dearborn St., Chicago; 2416 Allston Way, Berkeley, Calif.

Single subscription, 60 cents.

School subscription, 50 cents.

Entered at the Boston Post-Office as second-class matter. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on September 13, 1913. Printed in U. S. A.